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FORTUNES

WASHED

AWAY

"FARM SECURITY"

Broadcast No. 14 in the third year
in a series of dramatizations
of better land use

WLW, Cincinnati

July 27, 1940

1:15-1:30 p.m.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
DAYTON, OHIO

COMMUNICATION

RECEIVED

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SOUND: Thunder and rain...

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN THEME: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

ANNOUNCER

General Nathanael Greene is almost a forgotten figure. Yet he ranked second to George Washington during the Revolutionary War, served as second-in-command at Princeton, Brandywine, Valley Forge. He was known as "the man who saved the south", the south then being a thin strip of colonies stretching from the oyster bays of Maryland to the red and gray cotton fields of Georgia.

ORGAN: ON THE BANKS OF THE BRANDYWINE.

ANNOUNCER

A rich agricultural county, Greene County, Ohio, bears his name today. But let the spirit of Nathanael Greene tell the story of that county...(fade)

SPIRIT OF GREENE

Come with me to this picturesque, tranquil, prosperous farming region. Live again with me the days when Daniel Boone was a captive here, the days of the "underground tunnels," the days when floods and cyclones struck with all their fury, the days when Greene County gave to America such noted literary men as William Dean Howells and Whitelaw Reid. Live again with me the day when Thomas Bullit entered Old Chillicothe.

SOUND: Jabbering of Indians, fading when...

CHIEF

Silence! What news do you bring?

BULLIT

I bring you news from the Long Knife.

CHIEF

But if you are an ambassador, why did you not send a runner?

BULLIT

I bring you no bad news, Great Chief. The Long Knife and the Red men are at peace. I have come to you, my brothers, to have a friendly talk about settling on this side of the Ohio.

CHIEF

I ask again, why did you not send a runner?

BULLIT

I had no runner swifter than myself, and as I was in haste, I could not wait the return of a runner. If you were hungry and had killed a deer, would you send your squaw to town to tell the news, and wait her return before you would eat?

SOUND: Laughter from Indians...

CHIEF (laughing)

Truly well spoken, white brother. Come into the wigwam, and we shall together eat that same deer of which you speak. (fade)

ORGAN: INDIAN SUMMER.

CHIEF (fading in)

...and now that we have feasted, proceed with your mission.

BULLIT

Brother, I am sent with my people, whom I left on the Ohio, to settle the country on the other side of that river, as low down as the falls. We came from Virginia. I only want the country to settle and to cultivate the soil. There will be no objection to your hunting and trapping in it. I hope you will live with us in friendship.

SOUND: Murmuring of Indians...

CHIEF

Brother, you have come a hard journey through the woods and the grass. We are pleased to find that your people in settling our country are not to disturb us in our hunting. We must hunt to kill meat for our women and children, and to have something to buy powder and lead, and blankets. We desire you will be strong in keeping your promises toward us. We have tried to take care of the land. We hope the settlers will do the same. Go in peace.

ORGAN: ON THE BANKS OF THE BRANDYWINE.

SPIRIT OF GREENE

In that way the white settlers came into my county. With them came wheat, corn, rye, grass, oats, barley, sheep, swine. Men like Jesse McKay built great plantations. Agriculture flourished. Oh, but not all farmlands did well. Even the rich farm of McKay began to decline after his death. Soil erosion, constant cropping year in, year out, struck like a knife at the heart of this farm. A new tenant, Wilbur Neff, fought a slow but winning battle to restore the original fertility. Then came a heart-rending blow...(fade)

NEFF (very quietly)

Are the children in bed, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH

Yes, Maynard just finished his chores and turned in. Reva and Marvin went to bed an hour ago.

NEFF

Do you hear a strange noise outside?

ELIZABETH

Why...no. Nothing unusual.

NEFF

I thought maybe there was a wolf outside the door.

ELIZABETH

Now, Wilbur! Things aren't as bad as that! For the first time, we've got the farm built up so it's beginning to pay.

NEFF

I got some bad news today.

ELIZABETH (with alarm)

What do you mean?

NEFF

They're going to sell this farm.

ELIZABETH (gasping)

Oh!

NEFF

That means we'll have to move.

ELIZABETH

After ten long years...

NEFF

Yes, ever since Mr. McKay died, the heirs haven't been any too interested in the farm, and they've finally decided to liquidate the estate. They spoke to me about buying it first.

ELIZABETH

And that's what we've hoped and prayed for, year after year. We're only tenants, but...well, I don't know how to put it. I've grown to look on the farm as our own.

NEFF

I know how you feel. I feel the same way. Sometimes when I'm out plowing, I just want to stoop down and get a handful of dirt, and say, "this is my soil." I've tried to treat it as if it were my own. Those gullies over across the creek are gradually healing up-- and they were big enough to put that covered bridge in when we came here. And now...

ELIZABETH

We move on. Just when we were beginning to get a feeling of security on the farm. Farm security...(fade)

ORGAN: STORMY WEATHER...

SPIRIT OF GREENE

Oh, the skies looked dark and the days seemed drear in 1937, when Wilbur and Elizabeth Neff saw the approaching end of their dreams--dreams of owning a pleasant little farm in Greene County. But that year, the Congress of the United States of America passed the Farm Tenant Act, and the Farm Security Administration carried out the program. It was a happy day for a deserving tenant when...(fade)

CONKLIN

I can't tell you how happy I am, Wilbur, to notify you that the inspection committee has approved your application for a loan. A few more days...and the old McKay farm will be yours.

NEFF

My farm...

CONKLIN

Yes, but that's just the beginning. We want to help you and Mrs. Neff develop sound farm and home management plans, to work out operating budgets, and keep businesslike records.

NEFF

I'll take all the help I can get, Mr. Conklin. You know how hard I've worked to build up the place. It ought to be easy to pay for it in the 40-year period. I'd like to pay for it in a couple of years!

CONKLIN

Oh, no! One reason that the farm tenant loans are for 40 years, of course, is to make the payments within reach of the good farmer. But another reason is to avoid speculation--and then remember, we don't want anyone to mine the soil--that is, work it to death to pay for it in a hurry.

NEFF

You won't catch me mining the soil. I'm doing all I can to work out a good fertility plan.

CONKLIN

I'd suggest you see the fellows at the CC camp, Wilbur. They've been working out new farm plans to prevent erosion for quite a few farmers, and they might be able to help you. That field across the creek looks like a swell place for strip farming. Well, it'll be yours in a few days.

ORGAN: BLUE SKIES.

SOUND: Door opens and closes...

NEFF

Come on, Elizabeth! Put on your old gray bonnet..we're going to Xenia for a movie, and an ice cream soda, and buy you a new dress...

ELIZABETH (fading in)

Now, what on earth, Wilbur. Have you gone out of your head?

NEFF

Here it is...take a look at that paper.

ELIZABETH (reading)

Wilbur and Elizabeth Neff. So we own the farm at last.

NEFF

Not exactly. Forty more payments and its ours.

ELIZABETH

Our farm. Now we really have something to work for. We can put out shrubs...and they'll be our shrubs. Orchards, and they'll be our orchards. We can take more interest in the community, because we'll be a part of it. We'll have that feel of security.

SPIRIT OF GREENE

Security...farm security. Oh, the days are bright and the skies are blue for this farm family in Greene County...my county. Gone are the fears of the transient; gone, the worries of soil erosion. They worked hard. They deserved their reward. And as I look down from my place in the sky, my heart swells with Wilbur Neff as he holds his head high as he holds the plow's reins...with a smile, and maybe an occasional tear...as he says to himself, "This is my soil."

ORGAN: BLUE SKIES.

ANNOUNCER

That is the true story of Wilbur Neff, of Greene County, Ohio. And now, once again we turn to the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, and here is Ewing Jones.

JONES

Thanks, _____. Now, just to tie up a few loose ends... Thomas Bullit and his group settled Greene County...and some of them went on to found the little city we now know as Louisville, Kentucky.

As to Wilbur Neff, he worked out a fine soil-saving plan in cooperation with the CCC camp at Xenia. Alternating strips of corn and meadow have just about stopped soil erosion on two of his steepest hillsides. For his meadow, he uses a mixture of alfalfa, mammoth clover, alsike and timothy. He keeps permanent sod waterways in what ordinarily might turn into gullies. He is adding lime to his soil, with good results. It's a nice sight from the high yard surrounding his buildings--to look out over a well-kept, well-planned farm.

Now, as to the Farm Security Administration, I'm going to let Paul Bangham do the talking. Mr. Bangham is district supervisor of the FSA, with headquarters at Dayton, Ohio. Paul?

BANGHAM

Ewing, I won't go into all of the functions of the Farm Security Administration today. Suppose we just stick to the farm tenant loans, for that's the most important duty of the FSA.

JONES

All right...fine.

BANGHAM

The farm tenant aid program authorizes loans to competent (and I want to stress that word "competent") farm tenants, share-croppers, and farm laborers to enable them to become farm owners. More than two out of every five farmers in the United States are tenants, farming land they do not own, and their ranks have been increasing rapidly. One tenant out of every three moves to a new farm each year...

JONES

...and I think I know the result...in most cases, a gradual impoverishment of landlords, tenants, and the land itself.

BANGHAM

That's usually the rule.

JONES

Now, Paul, where are these loans made?

BANGHAM

Unfortunately, there aren't sufficient funds to make them in every county, just as there aren't sufficient funds for the Soil Conservation Service to set up demonstration areas in every county. So, the Secretary of Agriculture, with the advice of the state Farm Security Advisory Committees, selected certain counties in each state...

JONES

On what basis?

BANGHAM

Chiefly on the farm population and prevalence of tenancy and the availability of good land at reasonable prices. Now, you remember that I stressed the word competent tenants...

JONES

Such as Wilbur Neff...

BANGHAM

He's a fine example. Preference is given to married persons or persons with dependent families; to those able to make a down payment; or to those who own livestock and equipment necessary to carry on farming operations. And no loans are made to persons who can obtain an adequate loan for the purchase of a farm from other sources at reasonable terms. The county committee in each case, composed of three farmers, selects the applications on these grounds, also considering their character, ability, and experience.

JONES

All right, suppose I were such a farmer, and wanted to apply for a farm tenant loan. What would be the first step?

BANGHAM

I'd talk it over with the county agricultural agent. He could tell you if you were in an eligible county, and just where to apply. The unfortunate part is that the county committees can extend loans to only a few of the worthy and deserving tenants who may apply.

JONES

Well, suppose I get such a loan. Would it be large enough to make necessary repairs to farm structures, build new barns, or otherwise improve the farm?

BANGHAM

The loans include the funds needed to make repairs to existing buildings, to construct fences, improve land, or, when necessary, to build new buildings. In other words, while you're building up the land itself, you will have a chance to bring the residence and other buildings into such a state that the entire family may enjoy reasonable comfort, health, and convenience. All of this is a long time proposition, Ewing. You can't usually put in a complete new soil conservation plan in one year, or two years, or even three. It takes time. And that's the way with the all-around farm and home program developed by the Farm Security Administration. But if you will talk to such people as Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur Neff, and all of the others who have received such loans, you can't help but notice their changed attitude. They're more confident in the future, they have more comforts and happiness at home, and they have more faith in their fellow man.

JONES

And I don't know what more you could ask for. Thanks a lot for being with us, Paul Bangham of Dayton, Ohio, district supervisor for the Farm Security Administration. Now, one final word: The matter of farm ponds is mighty important here in the Ohio Valley. As the author of a new bulletin "Farm Ponds", points out, many stock water supplies dry up in the heat of summertime, just when farmers need them most, usually because they have been constructed improperly. This bulletin tells all about the construction of farm ponds, and how to make them work from a water conservation angle. So, if your stock pond dried up, or if your reservoir fill washed out and has to be rebuilt, you can get a free copy of the bulletin "Farm Ponds", by writing to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio.

ORGAN THEME: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS, fading...

JONES

This is Ewing Jones, speaking for the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, inviting you to be with us again next week, for another episode in "Fortunes Washed Away."

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

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